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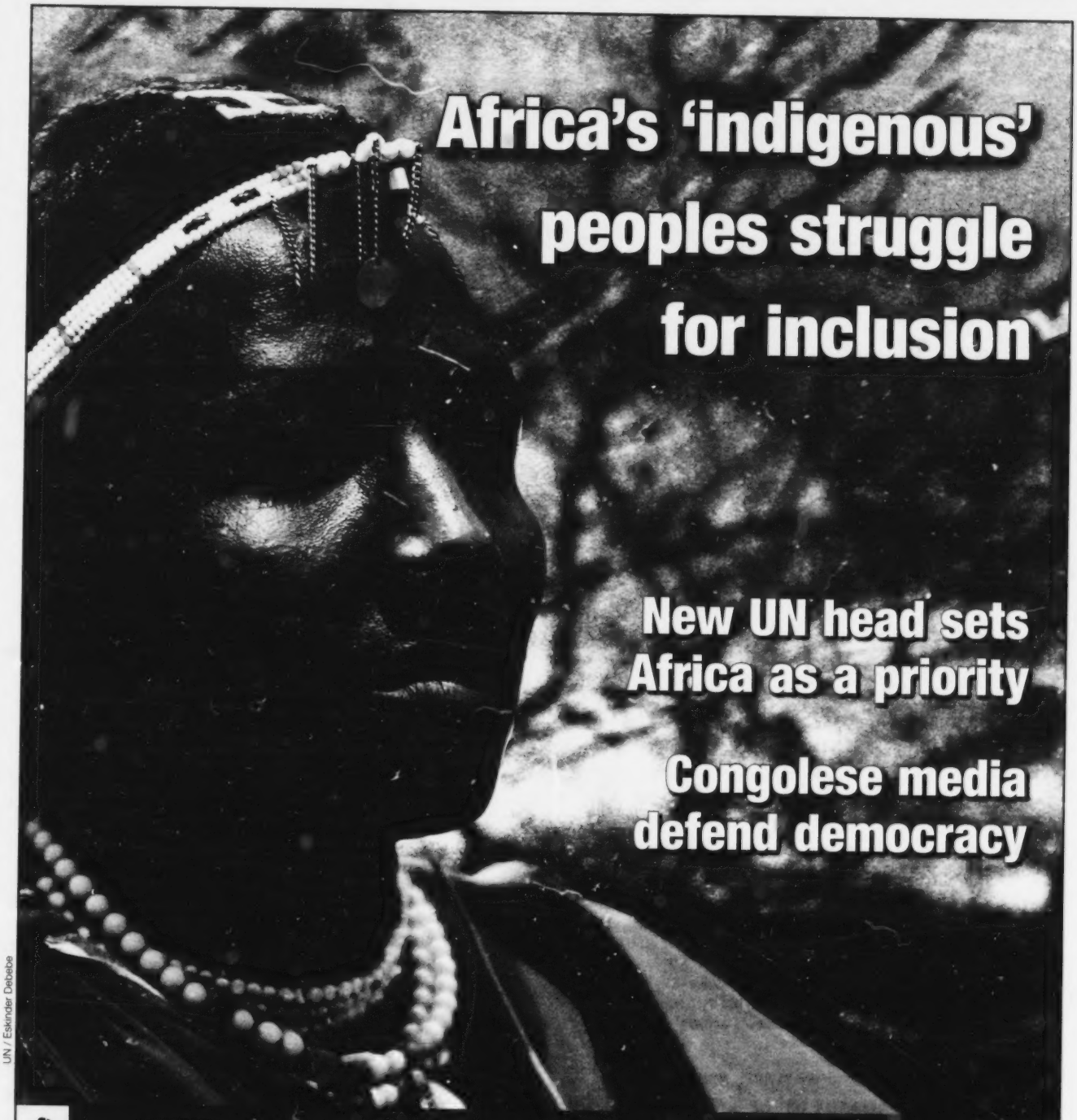

Africa's 'indigenous' peoples struggle for inclusion

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UN / Eskinder Debebe

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United Nations
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Africa a priority for new UN head

Ban Ki-moon sets African issues high on the global agenda

By **Ernest Harsch**

During his first official trip as UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon assured Africa's leaders that the continent will remain a central priority for the organization. Africa has achieved much through "unity of purpose," he told a summit meeting of the African Union (AU) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 29 January, just four weeks after taking office. "Unity of purpose is also the foundation of Africa's partnership with the United Nations," he emphasized, "as we take on the broad range of challenges we share."

Those challenges, Mr. Ban continued, include tackling ongoing conflicts in Côte d'Ivoire, Somalia and Sudan, building peace in countries just emerging from war, combating disease and ill health, reducing poverty, promoting broad-based development and countering the impact of climate change.

He commented to journalists: "My presence here in the first month of my tenure as the Secretary-General of the United Nations is a strong sign of the growing partnership between the United Nations and the African Union and of the high priority I attach to Africa."

Mr. Ban's trip, his appointment of an African woman (former Tanzanian Foreign Minister Asha-Rose Migiro) as deputy secretary-general and his numerous affirmations about the continent's importance came amidst some concern within Africa that the end of the tenure of the former Ghanaian secretary-general, Kofi Annan, might bring a shift in course. As a headline in the independent daily *L'Observateur Paalga* of Burkina Faso expressed it: "UN: change in men, change in priorities."

Mr. Ban tacitly acknowledged this worry in his address to the AU summit. After 15 years of being led by Africans (Mr. Annan and his Egyptian predecessor, Boutros Boutros-Ghali), the UN is now led by a non-African, observed Mr. Ban, who is from the Republic of Korea. "But like all human beings," he told the heads of state, "my origins are in the cradle of humanity, Africa, and I am proud of that."

The fundamental reasons for the UN's emphasis on Africa lie in the continent's unfortunate realities, noted then Under-Secretary-General for Africa Legwaila Joseph Legwaila. "People are constantly reminded of the carnage in places like Darfur," he told *Africa Renewal*. "People are reminded of the AIDS pandemic. And of course we are always described as the poorest of all continents." The challenges facing Africa will not be different because the UN now has an Asian Secretary-General, he said. "Africa will continue to experience the problems it has been experiencing."

Reuters/ Sekene Samuel

Mr. Ban Ki-moon visiting the Kibera slum in Nairobi, Kenya, during his first official trip as the new UN Secretary-General.

A built-in focus

Africa became a central priority for the UN years before someone from the continent ascended to the world body's highest office. At the urging of African countries, the UN General Assembly in 1986 held a special session to find ways for the continent to overcome its unprecedented economic crisis. Delegates from Africa, the rich donor countries and other parts of the world negotiated a five-year UN Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development. It amounted to a pact — unique in UN history for its focus on just one world region — in which African countries pledged to carry out sweeping economic reforms and donors promised to provide more aid and other support.

At the programme's conclusion, then Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar found that while Africa had undertaken a range of initiatives and achieved "notable progress towards democratization," the continent's economic and social conditions "actually worsened" during that period. The General Assembly responded by drawing up another plan, this time lasting a decade, called the UN New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s. It too achieved disappointing results.

African leaders then decided to take the initiative. In 2001 they adopted the New

see page 20

Pact to end use of children in war

States vow to 'spare no effort' in freeing child soldiers

By **Ernest Harsch**

Governments and armed groups that recruit children into their military ranks should no longer be allowed to "slip through the net," French Foreign Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy told a 5–6 February conference in Paris. He warned that such "lost children" represent a time bomb that could threaten stability and growth in Africa and beyond.

Mr. Ishmael Beah, a former child soldier from Sierra Leone, elaborated. If young ex-combatants are not rehabilitated, he said, they are at risk of becoming mercenaries. "They know how to use a gun. [If] there is a conflict next door offering $100 a day and all you can loot, they will go back to that." While rehabilitating child soldiers is not easy, he cited his own experience: "I'm living proof that it is possible." (See box.)

Called the Free Children from War conference, the event was organized by the French government and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF). Fifty-eight governments and dozens of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) signed a set of principles known as the Paris Commitments, in which they vowed to "spare no effort to end the unlawful recruitment or use of children by armed forces or groups in all regions of the world."

The UN estimates that about 300,000 children (defined as those under 18 years of age) are currently engaged in military conflicts in a score of countries, nearly half of them in Africa. While the Paris Commitments are not legally binding, they do carry significant moral and political weight, conference participants noted. Foreign Minister Youssouf Bakayoko of Côte d'Ivoire called the agreement a "breakthrough."

State responsibilities

Ever since 1996, when Ms. Graça Machel, Mozambique's former minister of education, submitted a major UN-commissioned report on the impact of conflict on children to the General Assembly, much of the campaign against recruiting child soldiers has been waged by the UN and NGOs.

But in Paris, for the first time, numerous governments signed on to that effort, including a number from countries where significant numbers of children still serve in military forces. The African signers, for example, included Burundi, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda.

"States bear the primary responsibility" for protecting children and reintegrating them into civilian life, argues the Paris Commitments document. Concretely, doing that includes identifying and securing the release of all children recruited by armed groups, "unconditionally at all times, including during armed conflict." In other words, the act of freeing children from military service should not be dependent on a cease-fire or peace agreement, nor should armed groups be allowed to use the presence of children in their ranks to gain leverage in peace negotiations.

Reuters / Jacky Naegelen

In addition, states the document, peace agreements must not grant amnesty to commanders or others who have recruited or committed other crimes against chil-

The eloquent voice of a former child soldier

Ishmael Beah was 12 years old when he was made homeless in 1993 by Sierra Leone's brutal civil war. He was just a year older when he was given drugs and a gun by government soldiers and first sent into battle. After three years of fighting — both killing and being shot at — he was rescued from military service by UNICEF personnel. Sent to a rehabilitation centre, he struggled to regain his humanity. Reentering civilian life was not easy, since many in Sierra Leone viewed him and other former combatants with fear and suspicion. With most of his family dead, Mr. Beah departed for the US. Sometime after, he gave this magazine a harrowing account of his ordeal (see "The road from soldier back to child," *Africa Recovery* October 2001). At the time, he preferred not be identified by his real name, but as "Djibril Karim." He was then taking courses at Oberlin College in Ohio and worried how his teachers and classmates would treat him if they knew he had once been a soldier.

Mr. Beah subsequently graduated from Oberlin (in 2004) and has been speaking publicly in his own name before the United Nations and numerous other groups. He became a member of the advisory committee of the Children's Rights Division of Human Rights Watch. In early 2007, shortly before the Free Children from War conference in Paris, he published his memoirs, *A Long Way Gone*.* It is a well written, unsentimental and harrowing account of one boy soldier's descent into — and escape from — hell. A rare firsthand account of war from the perspective of a child, the book has quickly become a nonfiction best seller.

* **A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Boy Soldier**, *by Ishmael Beah (Sarah Chrichton Books/Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 2007; 229 pp; hb $22)*

dren. Governments and courts must seek to prosecute those guilty of such acts. Encouraging such efforts, the International Criminal Court announced just a week before the Paris conference that it was opening its first trial, that of a militia leader from the eastern DRC accused of recruiting child soldiers.

Meanwhile, the conference participants agreed, child soldiers who have committed crimes should not be regarded only as perpetrators, but "primarily as victims of violations against international law." In line with international standards for juvenile justice, authorities should seek alternatives to judicial proceedings.

Attention to girls

The conference singled out the plight of girls, many of whom have been abducted by fighting forces to serve as domestic slaves, and who suffer rape and other sexual abuse and sometimes are compelled to fight. In some groups, girls make up 40 per cent of the children recruited, according to UN estimates.

"Girls in particular are forced to perform sexual services," noted UNICEF Executive Director Ann Veneman. As a result, she added, they are deprived of "their rights and their childhood." The Paris Commitments call on governments and other actors to "meet the specific needs of girls and their children for protection and assistance."

For both girls and boys who have been freed from military service, long-term support is essential for their rehabilitation and reintegration, conference participants emphasized. Poor African countries often lack the resources to carry out the task on their own. "We are calling on the international community to assist us in reintegrating the child soldiers into society," appealed Ms. Qamar Aden, president of Somalia's parliamentary human rights committee. She estimated that some 70,000 children have been recruited by all sides in Somalia's most recent conflict.

While some children may "voluntarily" join an armed group — usually to obtain food or protection — "no one is born violent," Mr. Beah noted in Paris. "No child in Africa, Latin America or Asia wants to be part of war." ■

Improving reintegration of former combatants

African experiences help UN 'refine' disarmament efforts

Through its peacekeeping operations, the UN has helped disarm and return to civilian life some 400,000 former combatants over the past five years alone. Many have been in Africa, including more than 72,000 in Sierra Leone, 100,000 in Liberia and 28,000 in Burundi. Some 126,000 are in the process of being demobilized in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

Ensuring that such ex-fighters do not again take up arms is "critical for the stabilization of post-conflict situations," then UN Deputy Secretary-General Mark Malloch Brown emphasized in December, when the UN launched its new Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards.

"By refining our approach to DDR," said Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Jean-Marie Guéhenno, "we can better help each ex-combatant to ultimately reintegrate into society." The aim, he said, is to have them "go from being a cause of insecurity to a force for growing stability."

In contrast to the ad hoc disarmament and reintegration efforts that marked many early peacekeeping operations, the new standards seek to foster a comprehensive approach. They provide detailed policies, guidelines and procedures for carrying out DDR, from planning and design through mainstreaming HIV/AIDS, gender and youth. To ensure easy access worldwide, the standards and many related documents have been posted on the Web (www.unddr.org).

From Freetown to Kinshasa

In developing the new standards, 14 UN departments and agencies pooled their expertise and drew on the lessons of more than a decade-and-a-half of DDR programmes around the world. African experiences featured prominently in that undertaking, not only because of the number of peacekeeping missions on the continent, but also as a result of an African-led initiative to approach disarmament and reintegration more systematically.

In June 2005, the government of Sierra Leone and the UN Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA) organized in Freetown an international conference on DDR and stability in Africa.

Although experts from donor countries and international and regional organizations also took part, the event highlighted the work of delegations from 15 African countries, which included government officials, current and former members of national DDR commissions and peacekeeping missions, beneficiaries of DDR programmes, members of armed forces and representatives of women's associations, civil society groups and communities hosting ex-combatants.

By comparing the successes and failures of earlier DDR programmes in Africa, the participants pinpointed a number of key recommendations. Those included emphasizing national ownership, paying special attention to the needs of child and women combatants, adopting a regional perspective and ensuring that the reintegration of ex-fighters is closely linked to long-term post-war economic and social development plans (see *Africa Renewal*, October 2005). Most of those recommendations were subsequently incorporated into the integrated DDR standards, Sierra Leone's UN Ambassador Joe Pemagbi observed at the December launch.

A second conference on DDR in Africa, to be held in Kinshasa, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, on 12–14 June, will help promote the standards and provide another occasion for Africans to draw lessons from their own experiences. Organized by OSAA and the newly elected Congolese government, the conference will focus in particular on the complexities of carrying out DDR operations in Africa's Great Lakes region, which is struggling to emerge from more than a decade of war. ■

'Indigenous' people fight for inclusion

Press for an end to discrimination and marginalization

By **Gumisai Mutume**

The San, the indigenous people of the Kalahari Desert in Botswana, won a major victory in December 2006, at the end of the longest and most expensive court proceeding in that country's history. The High Court ruled that the state had wrongfully evicted them from a reserve four years earlier and that they could return home. Civil society activists around the world hailed the ruling as a historic precedent for the rights of indigenous people everywhere, especially in Africa, where many governments have been reluctant to recognize the concept of indigenous rights.

Panos Pictures / Sven Torfinn

Maasai women in Kenya at a rally to protest their political marginalization and the sale of their communal lands.

The Botswana case stemmed from the San's eviction from the Central Kalahari Game Reserve (CKGR), one of the world's largest reserves, in 2002. In response to a class action suit filed by the San that same year, the court ruled that the government had acted "unconstitutionally" and "unlawfully." According to Mr. Rupert Isaacson of the Indigenous Land Rights Fund, a San advocacy group, "The removals were accompanied by beatings and the destruction of water sources."

The British colonial government created the reserve, which is 52,800 square kilometres — larger than Switzerland — during the days leading up to Botswana's independence in 1966. Anthropologists maintained that the San had inhabited the area for at least 40,000 years, but that their numbers were declining at an alarming rate. The colonial administration deemed them to be "endangered" and established the CKGR as a refuge.

After independence, the new government in Botswana encouraged the San to move out of the park into state-assisted settlements that were within reach of modern services such as schools and clinics and where they could assimilate into modern society. But many San refused, preferring to remain in a natural habitat where they could continue to live as hunters and gatherers, as they had done for thousands of years. Finally, the government decided to evict 3,000 San from the reserve, setting off the legal action.

Despite the court settlement, the battle is not over. The court ruled that the 189 applicants in the case and their children may return to the reserve. Some activists, such as members of the First Peoples of the Kalahari, contend that the ruling should cover all 50,000 San in the country. But the government of Botswana maintains that other San who wish to return may do so only if they apply for and obtain permits from the state.

Who is indigenous?

The case of the San in Botswana brings to the fore a delicate question in Africa: who is an indigenous person? Some communities claim indigenous status in Africa today on the grounds that their ancestors resisted the influence of the massive waves of migration of Bantu-speaking agro-pastoralists who migrated from western to southern Africa beginning around 1000 BC. While some were subsumed by those migrations, others maintained their distinct linguistic, cultural and social characteristics, largely as communities of hunters, gatherers and herders.

Later, Arab language and culture spread across northern and eastern Africa. And finally, a number of European countries colonized the continent, bringing their own influences. Those colonial governments often favoured the dominant, food-producing populations they found in their new colonies and marginalized the "aboriginal" peoples, as some historians refer to the indigenous people that had settled on the land before the Bantu.

Most governments that came to power following independence have been reluctant to acknowledge claims to rights, especially political rights, on the basis that a particular community regards itself as indigenous. After all, government offi-

cials argue, all black Africans consider themselves indigenous to the continent.

Mr. Nigel Crawhall, director of the Indigenous Peoples of Africa Coordinating Committee (IPACC), says the argument for recognizing indigenous rights does not rest on historical precedence. Communities arising from the Bantu migrations, he acknowledges, are just as African as everyone else. "The claims of indigenous peoples need to be seen in the context of their systematic discrimination and marginalization" under contemporary political and economic conditions.

"It was colonialism that brought new economic and political structures that reinforced the power of agricultural peoples over herders and gatherers, and set down the rules of who had access to the state apparatus," Mr. Crawhall explains. This meant that during colonial rule, agricultural peoples had easier — if still very limited — access to education, health care and other social services that were almost completely denied to indigenous communities. When colonialism ended, it was these educated elites that were able to take over the institutions of political and social power.

Bottom of the hierarchy

At the bottom of the colonial hierarchy were nomadic hunters and gatherers. They often withdrew into less hospitable environments, such as deep forests and deserts. In the worst cases, as in colonial South Africa, recalls Mr. Crawhall, European settlers tried to virtually exterminate the San. "They were hunted on horseback, killed with diseases, families were destroyed and children were given to other people as servants," he told *Africa Renewal*.

Among Africa's many indigenous peoples are the hunter-gatherer forest peoples ("pygmies") of central Africa, nomadic pastoralists such as the Maasai and Samburu in East Africa, the San in Southern Africa and the Amazigh people (Berbers) of North Africa and the Sahel.

"We may not all agree on the definition of indigenous or the categorization of communities as indigenous," notes Ms. Angela Khaminwa, a Nairobi-based expert on social inclusion policies. "Regardless of what label we place on ethnic communities that maintain traditional lifestyles and livelihoods, there is no doubt that many of these communities are vulnerable to labour and sexual exploitation."

Many such groups are struggling with the encroachment of farming into their areas. Others are threatened by conservation policies intended to protect species of animals and plants, but that forbid local communities to hunt or gather. Their languages and ways of life are being eroded. "The hesitancy of governments to address the issue of internal difference full force may be due to a need to promote national cohesion," says Ms. Khaminwa. Giving a community special protection, she adds, might be perceived as political favouritism.

The fears of African governments are not baseless. Insurgents and politicians have all too often dwelt on ethnic differences to mobilize support against their competitors. Claims by different ethnic communities over land and mineral rights, often justified on the basis of historical precedence, have frequently contributed to armed conflict.

'A legitimate call'

The UN estimates that there are about 370 million indigenous people in more than 70 countries around the world. They are among the most marginalized people in economic, social and cultural terms. Despite the challenges, the world's indigenous people have scored notable achievements in their efforts to reclaim rights during the last decade, designated by the UN as the International Decade of the World's Indigenous People (1995-2004). That period saw many changes in Africa, notes Mr. Crawhall. One of the most profound was "the rise of an organized civil society representing diverse indigenous peoples from one end of the continent to the other."

These civil-society groups lobbied the African Commission on Human and

Ms. Adophine Muley, representing the Twa "pygmies" of the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, at a UN press conference on indigenous issues.

UN photo/Eskinder Debebe

People's Rights, a continental body, to recognize that the concept of indigenous peoples is applicable in Africa. In 2003 the commission adopted a report of the commission's Working Group on Indigenous Populations/Communities, which acknowledged that "certain marginalized groups are discriminated against in particular ways because of their particular culture, mode of production and marginalized position within the state ...[a] form of discrimination that other groups within the state do not suffer from. The call of these marginalized groups to protection of their rights is a legitimate call to alleviate this particular form of discrimination."

The adoption of the report, in theory, subscribed all 53 member governments of the commission to the aims of promoting indigenous rights. But in reality, the majority of countries continue to struggle with putting such concepts into practice, explains Ms. Lucy Mulenkei, director of the Indigenous Information Network in Kenya. While a number of African governments argue that recognizing indigenous rights will foster ethnic tensions, "we who are working among indigenous communities still say we want to have these people recognized in order to deal with issues of

marginalization and so forth," she told *Africa Renewal*.

Under pressure from organizations representing indigenous people, some countries have made significant progress, she notes. Recently, Burundi amended its constitution to guarantee representation in the national assembly to the indigenous Twa people, who live in several countries in Africa's Great Lakes region. In neighbouring Rwanda, the government is working with the main Twa organization to investigate war crimes perpetrated against them during the 1994 genocide, in which an estimated one third of all Twa in that country were killed.

"The claims of indigenous peoples need to be seen in the context of their systematic discrimination and marginalization" under contemporary political and economic conditions.

—Nigel Crawhall, Indigenous Peoples of Africa Coordinating Committee

Elsewhere in Africa, Cameroon recognizes "pygmies" and nomadic pastoralists as indigenous people. The government agreed to comply with policies to compensate and resettle indigenous people affected by the construction of the Chad-Cameroon oil pipeline, an initiative supported by private investors and the World Bank. Morocco lifted a ban on the teaching of the Amazigh (Berber) language in schools and has set up a national commission to formulate policies on indigenous language and culture.

Contentious negotiations

The Decade of the World's Indigenous People also helped activists focus their attention on the creation of a Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues at the UN and draft a declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. The Permanent Forum, which held its first meeting in 2002, gathers annually at UN headquarters to give a voice to the world's indigenous people at an intergovernmental level.

Representatives of indigenous people and the international community first began working on the declaration on the rights of indigenous people in 1985. The draft was completed in 1993 (see box) and has been under negotiation since then. On the International Day of the World's Indigenous People in August 2006, then UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan described it as the product of "many years of complex and at times contentious negotiations." The declaration, he said, was "an instrument of historic significance for the advancement of the rights and dignity of the world's indigenous peoples."

The expected adoption of the declaration by the UN General Assembly in November of that year, Mr. Annan noted, would be a major achievement. But that was not to be. Namibia and other African countries, joined by Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the US, blocked the adoption of the agreement.

The Namibian representative to the meeting explained that some of the declaration's provisions ran counter to the national constitutions of a number of African countries. However, he added, the declaration was of such critical importance that it was only "fair and reasonable" to defer its adoption to allow more consultations.

Kenya's representative said the declaration contained a number of contradictions. For instance, it talks of "self-determination" as if it were referring to people living under colonial rule. In his country, he said, all citizens enjoyed the right to self-determination. Another African delegate noted that the concept of self-determination was in direct contradiction to efforts to integrate indigenous people into the mainstream of society. The declaration was divisive, he argued, isolating groups and inciting them to establish their own institutions alongside existing central ones.

The General Assembly delayed the adoption of the declaration until its next session, in September 2007. The failure to approve the draft declaration surprised many observers because in June 2006, African and other states had adopted it at the UN Human Rights Council. "We feel very sad about the failure to adopt the declaration," says Ms. Mulenkei, a member of Kenya's indigenous Maasai community.

Ms. Mulenkei notes that many of the concerns that African countries are now bringing up have been debated for a long time, over two decades of negotiations. She believes the real reasons for blocking the resolution are political and economic. Many of the countries opposing the declaration fear that it would give indigenous people the authority to reclaim land and seek compensation for centuries of discrimination.

"All these years that the discussions on the draft declaration have been going on, we barely had African governments participating," Ms. Mulenkei says. "And then at the last minute they come in and say no to the draft declaration. This takes us back many years." But, she adds, it is now too late for governments to break the momentum. She foresees more progress on indigenous rights in the near future. ■

Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

The draft declaration addresses individual, collective, cultural and identity rights. It extends to indigenous people the rights to education, health and employment. It also grants them the right to self-determination, to maintain their distinct political, legal, economic, social and cultural institutions and to enjoy all the rights contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

As with other UN declarations, it is not legally binding. But upon adoption it would set international standards on the treatment of indigenous people. It calls for resources to promote indigenous culture and languages, confirms the right of indigenous peoples to lands, territories and resources and recognizes their right to their means of subsistence and development. The declaration outlaws discrimination against indigenous people and states that if their rights are violated, they are entitled to just and fair redress.

Congolese media defend democracy

Press freedom and responsibility go hand in hand

By **Michael Fleshman**

Since its founding in 1998, the non-governmental watchdog group Journaliste en danger (JED) has won international recognition for its tenacious defence of press freedom in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the vast central African country battered by decades of dictatorship, ethnic division and war. But when inflammatory reporting fuelled political violence in the capital, Kinshasa, in August 2006, threatening elections, the JED found itself in the unusual position of calling for stronger control of abuses by the media by the official regulatory agency, along with more aggressive enforcement of ethics standards by professional media bodies.

Within a week of the violence, the rights group convened a meeting of the country's main journalists' associations and media houses to demand an end to biased coverage of political events, even-handed enforcement of media laws by the official Haute authorité des média (HAM) and the relaunch of an industry-wide "tribunal of peers" to monitor compliance with standards of accuracy and fairness.

In a post-election analysis of media coverage during the campaign, the JED found that some newspaper, radio and television outlets were acting as a "propaganda press committed to defending the political interests of its own candidates and demonizing its political adversaries," in a country where many private media companies are owned by candidates and political parties.

The press freedom group charged that some coverage resorted to "shamefully exploiting macabre images" of the violence, "inciting revenge and accusations, justifying crime and . . . cementing political tensions" between ethnic groups, parties and regions throughout the election campaign. "Worst of all," the report charged, "state-owned radio and television stations took part in the general decline by siding almost exclusively" with the president's party.

Media's role vital

The stakes in the DRC were high. The 1994 genocide in neighbouring Rwanda had touched off more than a decade of both internal conflict and external intervention in the DRC (formerly Zaire). Estimates of the number of deaths caused by violence, disease and the collapse of basic services run as high as 4 million. A fragile peace agreement was signed in 2002 and opened the way for the largest UN peacekeeping operation in history, the UN Organization Mission in the DRC (MONUC), which has nearly 20,000 international soldiers and civilians.

Reading newspapers in Kinshasa: Media groups are striving to improve their quality and professionalism.

AP / Christine Nesbitt

Despite the UN presence, ethnic conflict continued in the eastern part of the country, and the election period itself was marred by clashes between supporters of the incumbent, President Joseph Kabila, and those of a former rebel leader, Mr. Jean-Pierre Bemba. Mr. Kabila was declared the winner of presidential runoff elections in October 2006 that Congolese and international observers declared generally free and fair.

Many saw the role of the media as vital to the success of the transitional period that began after the signing of the December 2002 accord. In a resolution adopted earlier that year at protracted peace talks known as the Inter-Congolese Dialogue, the warring parties declared that "independent, free, responsible and efficient media are a guarantee for public freedoms, the smooth running of democracy and social cohesion." During the election campaign, they noted, the media would be essential in helping voters "gain insight into the profiles of public figures and politicians, as well as into their programmes. . . . This enables the public to express itself credibly during electoral and consultative events."

The media were especially important in a country the size of Western Europe with few roads and railways, 1.5 million people uprooted from their homes by violence and no experience of political pluralism or elections. The large distances and high cost of travel, weak and poorly financed political parties and the continuing presence of armed, partisan militias in some areas meant that traditional campaigning by candidates and party officials would be

limited. That placed an even greater burden on the media as the main vehicle for voter education and political campaigning.

Freedom of expression and the press, largely unknown during the dictatorial 30-year rule of Mobutu Sese Seko, was entrenched in the transition constitution. Article 27 established individual freedom of expression. Article 28 guaranteed press freedom, limited by the need to "safeguard public order [and] morality" and the rights of others. Clause 29 established a public

AP / Schalk van Zuydam

Some Congolese newspapers and broadcasters have worsened political tensions by disseminating "hate" messages.

"right to information." It also required state-owned media to be objective and impartial and to provide fair access for "a plurality of opinions." Oversight and regulation of the media was entrusted to the HAM, an official body composed of all parties in the transitional unity government and headed by a respected journalist and award-winning rights campaigner, Mr. Modeste Mutinga.

'Irresponsible reporting'

Training increased in an effort to prepare the Congolese media for its new role as an instrument of democracy. The JED and the other media organizations sponsored many briefings and seminars for reporters, broadcasters and editors on the elections and the media's ethical and professional obligations. The German Konrad Adenauer Foundation conducted a 12-day training course in June 2006 for 15 Congolese provincial journalists, a programme that included background on the electoral process, meetings with senior transition officials and the head of the national electoral commission, and training in interviewing, recording and editing techniques.

But in the end, noted Ms. Julia Crawford, Africa director for the New York–based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), "while some media in the DRC have played an important role" in the process, "there were a lot of problems and a lot of irresponsible reporting." Much of the media, particularly in Kinshasa, she said, were strongly partisan, and, in the view of many international and local observers, sometimes fanned sectarian divisions through slanted or false reporting.

Encouragingly, Ms. Crawford told *Africa Renewal*, "many DRC press freedom organizations, particularly JED, spearheaded the effort to highlight abuses, even as they advocated for more press freedom and greater professional responsibility."

Many of the worst abuses seemed to occur at moments of crisis. During heavy fighting between ethnic militias in the eastern town of Bunia in 2003, JED President Donat M'baya Tshimanga reported, the Congolese media generated extensive coverage of the violence, but without sending reporters to the scene. "The media — and they may not even be aware of it — serve as a platform for the warlords, who use the rivalry between different ethnic groups in Bunia and the DRC only for their own profit. . . . The hate speeches of the conflict would not have had the same effect if the media had not agreed to play the role of mouthpiece" for the opposing sides.

In a special report on the DRC in 2004, the CPJ observed that national and local officials sometimes exceeded their authority under the transitional constitution to censor and punish unfavourable or incendiary reporting — taking radio and television stations off the air and threatening legal action against reporters in contravention of the agreement. The international press freedom group also documented instances of continued harassment and assault of journalists by militias and political parties throughout the transition.

Nor was the official media oversight body, the HAM, immune to criticism. In its November analysis of the media, the JED charged that "the struggle against incitement to hatred and violence, while noble in principle, has allowed the media regulator to exercise systematic censorship of the privately owned media, thereby restricting the democratic debate so greatly needed during the election period, while the state-owned media has been usurped by the ruling party."

According to a report by the nongovernmental International Crisis Group, based in Brussels, the HAM shut down a pro-government radio and television station in 2005 for 15 days for broadcasting a politician's comments describing a mixed-race opponent as "a bat — half mouse, half bird" and urging government partisans to "trap it, burn it and eat it." The same station broadcast another speaker's call on party supporters to grab opposition leaders and "burn them with tyres around their necks." In contrast, two opposition newspapers were shuttered for 90 days for contentious but less inflammatory reports alleging ongoing allegiances between Mr.

Kabila and neighbouring Tanzania, where he grew up. Overall, concluded the JED, "a large number of Congolese media failed to live up to their role."

Although the JED's primary role is to protect press freedom and individual journalists from government censorship and harassment, noted Ms. Crawford, the organization has always pursued "a double-pronged approach: shouting to local and international media about abuses by the authorities . . . but at the same time pushing for more responsibility in the journalism profession."

That approach was in large part a response to serious abuses by the media, she said. But in addition, "the JED has also said on numerous occasions that the entire press corps could find itself being penalized for the excesses of only some sections of the media." Improving the quality and accuracy of reporting in the DRC, she observed, was one way to protect the press from government interference.

Entrenched obstacles

Despite the problems, the Congolese media produced a body of sound reporting and the transitional institutions often worked well in moving quickly against abuses. According to many observers, the tattered condition of the Congolese media meant that the situation could have been much worse.

In a detailed survey of the state of the Congolese media commissioned by the South African Institute for the Advancement of Journalism in late 2004, Mr. Claude Kabemba observed that while the DRC media was "one of the most diverse and free on the continent, the quality of information and the role of the media in the democratization process leaves much to be desired."

Despite the presence of more than 200 different newspapers, 52 private television networks and some 250 private and community radio broadcasters, in addition to state radio and television, Mr. Kabemba asserted that few "capture the reality of the society." Instead, these media outlets reflect "the political, religious and ethnic inclinations of their owners." The profession itself, he said, is "divided and without vision" and is often marked by "a total disregard for ethics and professionalism."

Part of the explanation is financial, as the steady decline in the country's economic and social fortunes has taken an inevitable toll on the media industry. Printing presses and broadcasting equipment are often decades old, expensive to operate, difficult to repair and maintain and inadequate for meeting the information needs of a population of more than 50 million. Neither state television and radio nor the scores of private stations transmit nationally, as antiquated equipment and chaotic regulations limit their broadcast range.

Dire poverty is another major obstacle. Few of the country's nearly 3,000 trained journalists earn a living wage. Instead, journalists are paid to write stories by the individuals or organizations they are covering — a practice known as *le coupage* (literally, "blending"). "Most journalists go around searching not for news but for people who can pay them to publish their stories," Mr. Kabemba wrote. The resulting stories invariably reflect "what the person who pays the money wants to hear" and bring the profession into public disrepute.

Reforming the DRC's economic and political culture to allow the media to play their part in development and nation-building will be a major challenge to the nation's journalists, its fledgling democratic government and the international community. In his conclusion, Mr. Kabemba argues for a top-to-bottom overhaul of the industry, including massive retraining of staff, investment in modern printing presses and transmitters, refurbishment of the education system, adoption of new media laws and pay scales that can help insulate the press from undue political influence and the temptation of *le coupage*.

"The DRC is the principal reservoir of world strategic minerals which are the envy of both regional and international powers," Mr. Kabemba concluded. The country "needs to be protected by a truly democratic state. . . . The media holds the crucial key in promoting the culture of democracy and good governance, but it needs the necessary support to play its role efficiently and correctly." ■

The UN's Radio Okapi

Given the shortcomings of the DRC's national media, the dangerous divisions among Congolese and the enormous territory to monitor, the UN peacekeeping mission attaches great importance to the use of media to promote reconciliation and democracy. One result has been Radio Okapi, the innovative official MONUC radio station established jointly with a Swiss non-governmental organization, Fondation Hirondelle. Staffed almost entirely by Congolese journalists, Radio Okapi states that its mandate is "to inform the Congolese public and the international community of the process of the political transition" and to serve as a "communication relay" between MONUC and the Congolese public.

Broadcasting in the DRC's five main languages and able to reach virtually every corner of the country through its network of transmitters, relay towers and shortwave equipment, Radio Okapi is the only media outlet with national reach. Its slogan, "breath of the DRC," was soon associated with reliable news reporting and unbiased programming about the transition to democracy.

In contrast to much of the local media, Radio Okapi's reporters are comparatively well paid and rigorously trained in journalistic ethics and reporting standards. *Le coupage* — accepting payment in return for favourable stories — is forbidden, as is editorializing on behalf of parties or individuals. The station pioneered a number of journalistic firsts in the DRC, including political debates, fair access to airtime for political parties and scientific opinion polling.

Radio Okapi's status as MONUC's official radio outlet has insulated editors and reporters from political influence and freed the station from dependence on wealthy patrons eager to promote their political views. Its emphasis on political impartiality, financial independence and high professional standards make it a model for journalism in the transition to Congolese democracy.

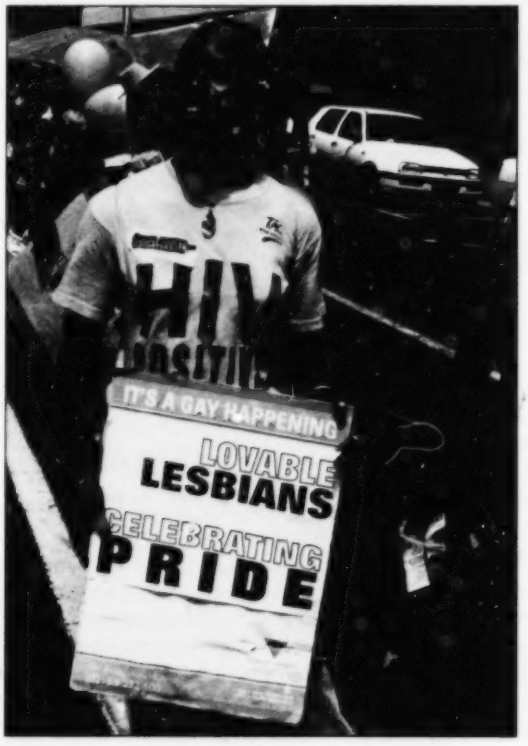
African gays and lesbians combat bias

An 'invisible' minority seeks legal safeguards, acceptance

By **Michael Fleshman**

The international campaign for equal rights for homosexuals and other sexual minorities took a step forward on 14 November when South Africa became the first country in Africa, and the fifth in the world, to legalize same-sex marriage. "This country cannot continue to be a prisoner of the backward, time-worn prejudices which have no basis," declared ruling African National Congress parliamentarian and Defence Minister Mosiuoa Lekota in urging passage. "Culture is not static."

The new law, adopted by a 230–41 vote, was welcomed by gay and lesbian activists in South Africa and around the world as a significant advance for equal rights. But it is not a trend. Conservative religious and political leaders in many countries still strongly oppose equal rights for homosexuals, including same-sex marriage. The week before the South African move, same-sex marriages were banned in eight US states, although similar proposals were defeated in a dozen others. In Nigeria, President Olusegun Obasanjo introduced legislation in 2006 that not only bars same-sex marriages but criminalizes anyone who "performs, witnesses, aids or abets" such ceremonies. Sex between men in Nigeria, defined as sodomy, was already punishable by up to 14 years in prison, reports the non-governmental International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA).



iAfrika Photos / Jeremy Jowell

Gay pride march in South Africa: African gays and lesbians are challenging discrimination and prohibitions.

'Ultimate rejection' of human rights

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour noted in August 2006 that worldwide, more than 80 countries criminalize consensual sexual relations between persons of the same sex — including seven in which the punishment can be death. "There is no doubt that these laws violate international human rights standards," she said. "Neither the existence of national laws nor the prevalence of custom can ever justify the abuse, attacks, torture and indeed killings that gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender persons are subjected to because of who they are or are perceived to be."

The "shameful silence" with which homophobic violence is greeted by governments and society, she told delegates to a Montreal human rights conference, is the "ultimate rejection of the fundamental principle of the universality of rights."

In Africa, according to a 2000 study by the ILGA, homosexuality was illegal in 29 countries and enjoyed legal protection in just 10. Although sexual minorities are gradually winning recognition and protection of their rights under the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and other human rights treaties, they remain at great risk of official harassment, arbitrary detention, public stigmatization, extortion and even assault because of their sexual orientation. These minorities include lesbians, homosexual men (often referred to as "gay"), bisexuals and persons of one sex who identify primarily as members of the other (known as "transgendered").

Discrimination, isolation, repression

Bias and stigmatization against homosexuals and other sexual minorities in Africa is rooted in deeply held cultural and religious values. They can be accompanied by abuses, are too often enforced by vigilante violence and are sometimes enshrined in law.

In one widely reported instance, the UN Human Rights Commission found Cameroon in violation of its treaty obligations after police arrested 17 men at a Yaoundé nightclub believed to be frequented by members of the gay and lesbian community and held nine for more than a year. One of the detainees, a 30-year-old man living with HIV/AIDS, died 10 days after his release.

Prosecutors initially charged the men with "homosexuality," although that is not itself a crime in Cameroon. Seven of the men were later convicted under the country's anti-sodomy law, although no evidence of any sexual activity was presented. In a letter to the New York–based International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC), a senior government official said that homosexuality was not acceptable in society and defended the arrests as necessary to preserve "positive African cultural values."

In Uganda, five men were arrested in October 2006 under the country's colonial-era anti-sodomy law, which can bring life imprisonment upon conviction. The arrests followed by months the publication in a Kampala magazine of a list of 45 men alleged to be homosexuals. The editors acted, they claimed, "to show the nation ...

how fast the terrible vice known as sodomy is eating up our society." The publication was denounced as "homophobic" by Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG), a human rights organization in Kampala. It said the men now lived "under unbelievable fear of being arrested, ostracized by their families or sacked from their jobs."

It was not the first time Ugandan activists linked hostile articles in the press to victimization. In 2005, local government officials raided the home of SMUG chairperson Juliet Victor Mukasa, seized files and papers and briefly detained another activist after a state-owned newspaper called on police to "visit the holes mentioned in the press, spy on the perverts, arrest and prosecute them."

'Highly vulnerable'

Nor is family or community necessarily a haven. In testimony at the UN Council on Human Rights, Ms. Mukasa, a transgendered person, described her life as a member of this "highly vulnerable" community: "In Africa, transgendered people are seriously punished for being who they are. I was always being beaten by my father for 'behaving' like a boy. In school the same story. . . . I became the laughingstock of the village and expelled myself because of the humiliation.

"In church I was once stripped naked before a multitude of people. The pastor 'saw' the spirit of a young man inside me and they burnt my clothes and shoes in order to kill the male spirit. . . . As a transgendered person, it is constantly demanded of me to explain and justify why I do not fit into other people's idea of what a man or a woman should be."

A gay Nigerian man, who refused to provide his name for fear of reprisal, told IGLHRC in early 2006 that "a team of policemen in Lagos came to my apartment and took me away to an unknown place for two days. I was beaten beyond recognition and am still receiving treatment for the head injury I received. I was dehumanized and paraded naked to the press. My money, ID card and shoes were taken. Eventually I was released without being charged and tried. My only offence was that I am gay. I no longer live in Nigeria. I cannot go back there."

'Un-African' claims challenged

Much of the stigma attached to homosexuality in Africa has been justified by opponents on broad religious or cultural grounds, with assertions that same-sex relationships are condemned in the Bible or Qur'an or that they never occurred in pre-colonial African society. Religious scholars on both sides of the issue are still debating, sometimes bitterly, the proper interpretation of scriptural references to homosexuality.

UN / Mark Garten

"Neither the existence of national laws nor the prevalence of custom can ever justify the abuse, attacks, torture and indeed killings that gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people are subjected to."

— Ms. Louise Arbour, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

Recent research by African and Northern academics, however, is challenging the assertion that homosexuality was imported to Africa by colonialism and is not compatible with tradition and culture.

To be sure, same-sex relationships can raise a host of issues in societies where marriage and family are intimately bound up with access to land and property, inheritance rights, community status and even political stability. In an interview with the UK *Independent* newspaper, a South African traditional healer, Mrs. Nokuzola Mndende, lamented the difficulty of applying traditional practices to same-sex couples: "There's the issue of lobola [a traditional dowry paid to the family of the bride]. Normally the man pays it. In this case who's going to pay?" The prospect of same-sex households being childless and thus complicating long-standing inheritance and family practices is another concern raised by traditionalists.

But research among the Gikuyu people of Murang'a district in central Kenya by Wairimu Ngaruiya Njambi and William O'Brien found traditional acceptance of "woman-woman marriage" when such relationships brought children into households or eased disputes over inheritance of land and other property. In one case, they reported in 2000 in a scholarly article in the US *National Women Studies Association Journal*, a childless woman married a younger woman with the expectation that the new wife would bear children by a male partner and create heirs. In the relationships examined in the study, the complexities of gender roles were more a source of amusement than tension in the community, and, at least within Gikuyu tradition, acceptable.

Other researchers have found traditional homosexual and bisexual practices among men in some African cultures as well, and words for homosexuality, gay men and lesbians in a large number of indigenous languages.

Some Gikuyu women in same-sex relationships have expressed a sense of liberation from male domination and of equality within the marriage. One female "husband" told researchers: "I don't have a man, but I have a woman who cares for me. I belong to her and she belongs to me. And I tell you I don't have to worry about a man telling me what to do."

In the view of many such researchers, the traditional African family was quite adaptable, and sometimes encompassed a range of same-sex relationships, entered into for economic, romantic and emotional reasons.

Out of the shadows

Despite the risks, a slowly growing number of African gays and lesbians, encouraged by the spread of democracy and galvanized by the need to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS, have emerged from the shadows to confront stigma. In recent years gay and lesbian advocates have become more visible — challenging legal discrimination

see page 21

Water betters lives in Tanzania

Access to clean water critical to NEPAD development goals

By **Itai Madamombe**

No one in Lusala needs to walk more than 400 metres in search of water anymore. Fresh water gushes from taps at 11 drawing-points right within the Tanzanian community. For years, shortages sent women and children, the main collectors, several kilometres away each day. The drudgery was worsened by the hard-rock terrain they had to climb carrying heavy pots back to their hilltop village, located about 700 kilometres southwest of Dar es Salaam, the Tanzanian capital.

"Life is much better now that I have clean water near my house," Elizabeth Mtweve, a villager and mother of four, told *Africa Renewal*. "I don't walk all day in the heat to find water. In three to five minutes you fill your bucket by turning a tap. The water project has saved every woman in Lusala a lot of hardship and time."

With water taps nearby, villagers no longer have to walk so far to fetch water.

"My children, and even myself, used to fall sick because of dirty water," she adds. "Now we don't run to the hospital complaining of diarrhoea anymore. With clean water, we enjoy good health."

Lusala's estimated 4,000 inhabitants depend on farming for a livelihood, and their farm income partially funded the water scheme. People grow coffee and bananas to sell. Maize and beans are also popular, as both subsistence and cash crops. Villagers raise chickens, goats, small ruminants and some cattle. The UN Development Programme (UNDP) — which also funded the water project in Lusala — said lack of water made it hard for villagers to take care of their animals. Contaminated water also caused most of the village's health problems, further deepening poverty in the community.

Not difficult or expensive

Across Africa, cholera, typhoid, dysentery and other diseases kill thousands each year. African leaders, through their development blueprint, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), have identified water scarcity as one of the factors undermining the continent's development. NEPAD provides an overarching framework for efforts to ensure that households, schools, farms, hospitals, industries and other important operations have enough water to meet their needs. African countries have agreed to bring safe, clean water to within no more than 15 minutes walking distance for their citizens.

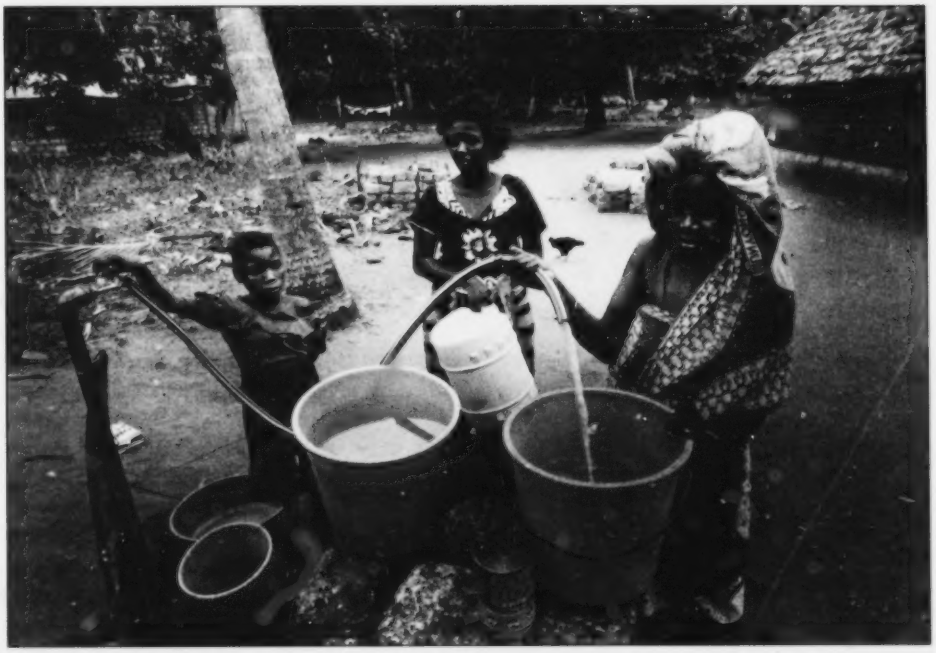
The Tanzanian government, with support from UNDP, responded to the water problems that plagued Lusala village. UNDP reports that the scheme uses gravity to tap water from a higher point, so that it naturally flows down through two intake pipes into a 75-cubic-metre reservoir. From there, it is distributed via ground pipes to 11 points where people simply turn on taps to fill their containers.

African leaders, through NEPAD, have identified water scarcity as one of the factors undermining the continent's development.

"Such water schemes are not difficult or too expensive to set up," Nehemiah Murusuri, the UNDP country coordinator in Tanzania, told *Africa Renewal*. "You use the natural pull of gravity, so no complicated machines, no pumping is

necessary. The maintenance is also very cheap and easy. Apart from the rare bursting of a pipe or replacing a loose tap, there is nothing much needed once you set it up."

Bringing fresh water to Lusala, though not cheap, was not prohibitively expensive. The project, Mr. Murusuri noted, cost the equivalent of US$40,000 — a figure that would have likely quadrupled had private contractors implemented it. Instead, community members, with technical guidance from government water surveyors and engineers, built the reservoir, installed pipes and provided all the necessary labour.



Villagers work together to build and maintain their water system.

Photos: Panos Pictures, Sam Dunn

Every family in Lusala was allocated a portion of a 9.4 kilometre trench that needed to be dug in order for the pipes to be installed, explains Dominicus Mganwa, chairperson of the Lusala Development Association, which was formed by villagers to organize their participation in the scheme. The association is today responsible for collecting water fees from users. The money is used to repair equipment when needed.

Coming together

"Working together, problems came up here and there," Mr. Mganwa notes. This was particularly the case when "trying to decide what we wanted and who was responsible for what. But in the end we learned to resolve our differences. This has benefited the whole community."

The availability of clean water, he continues, has changed the village in unexpected ways. "Since water is nearby, people have started small brick projects, so now you see good quality houses, all over Lusala, replacing mud and pole huts. This we did not expect, but we are very pleased."

Two years after the completion of the water project, Mr. Murusuri of UNDP says, the benefits have indeed been multifaceted and have helped make progress towards the goals set by African leaders in other areas. "We are not only putting a water project in place, but also contributing to NEPAD and the Millennium Development Goals to improve water, governance and health and to reduce poverty. People learned to reach agreements through democratic means. Hospital records show a significant drop in the number of people reporting waterborne diseases. Women have more time to focus on income-generating activities."

Such water projects can be replicated easily in other villages, notes Bedoumra Kordje, director of the Africa Water Facilities at the African Development Bank. There are many successful initiatives to supply safe water for domestic and industrial needs, he told *Africa Renewal*. But efforts fall short of what is needed to promote lasting socioeconomic development.

"We are not only putting a water project in place, but also contributing to NEPAD and the Millennium Development Goals to improve water, governance and health and to reduce poverty."

—Nehemiah Murusuri, UNDP Tanzania country coordinator

"There is no question that the availability of fresh water is one of the most critical factors in development," says Mr. Kordje. "Yet Africa enjoys only about 3 per cent of its annual renewable water supply, compared to over 80 per cent in the United States." African countries, he adds, need to improve storage and distribution to help the estimated 300 million people who do not yet have access to clean water.

"We must ensure water is available," says Tanzanian President Jakaya Kikwete. "You can do anything you want to improve the infrastructure, but if there is no water, then it amounts to zero work." The government aims to bring clean safe water to within 400 metres of every Tanzanian household by 2015. For Lusala village, thankfully, that is no longer another goal waiting to happen. ■

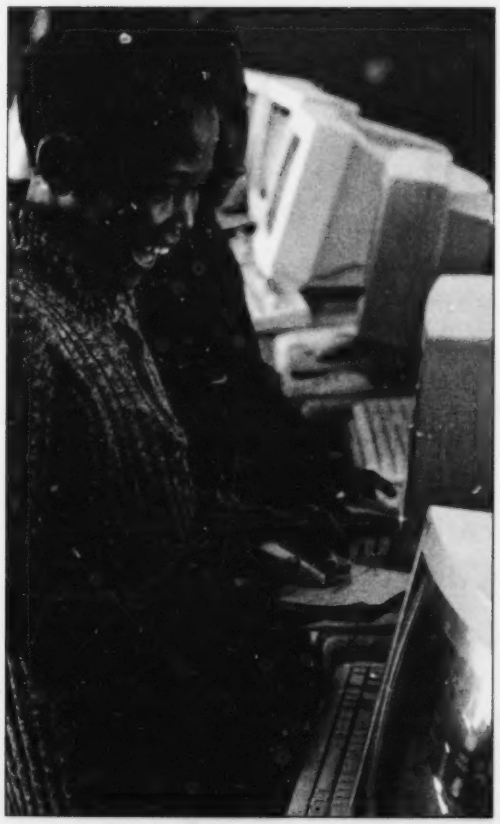
Internet enriches learning in rural Uganda

NEPAD e-schools connecting students to the world

By ***Itai Madamombe***

It was hard to squeeze into the classroom. Dozens of students clustered around computers, checking news on their favourite football teams in the World Cup tournament. Hardly remarkable: some 30 million people were watching the games worldwide.

What is different is that Bugulumbya is in rural Uganda, which for years has remained fairly untouched by advances in world technology. But the school made headlines in July 2005 when it became the very first institution to receive computers under the electronic-school (or "e-school") initiative of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).



Even in rural schools NEPAD project is connecting students to the Internet and expanding their learning horizons.

iAfrica Photos / Rodger Bosch

"We are experiencing the world from our classroom," beamed a 17-year old student, Munhana Paul Rogers. During breaks and after school, students closely monitored the latest news and scores. Though most of his favourite teams from Africa were knocked out of the competition early, Paul says there is a lot to be happy about.

"Since Bugulumbya received computers, we see a big difference in the way we learn. When you have the Internet, it's like you have another five teachers in the classroom. It helps us find information we need on anything. International football matches, how to protect yourself from HIV/AIDS — it's all there," Paul told *Africa Renewal*.

African governments recognize the pivotal role information and communications technologies (ICTs) play in accelerating economic growth and social development. The Internet, telephones, computers, radios and televisions have the potential to foster regional integration, as promoted by NEPAD.

Useful skills

Students like Paul are the focus of the e-schools initiative. Its purpose is to provide every student with at least basic skills and the means to use ICTs to better his or her life, get better-paying jobs and help develop the continent.

"We have many intelligent students here in rural Uganda, and many parts of Africa, who might not get the chance to get into top universities simply because they are poor," commented John Busima, the headmaster of Bugulumbya. "But if we give them useful skills, through initiatives like this by NEPAD, they will create not only their own livelihood, but also help their countries to develop."

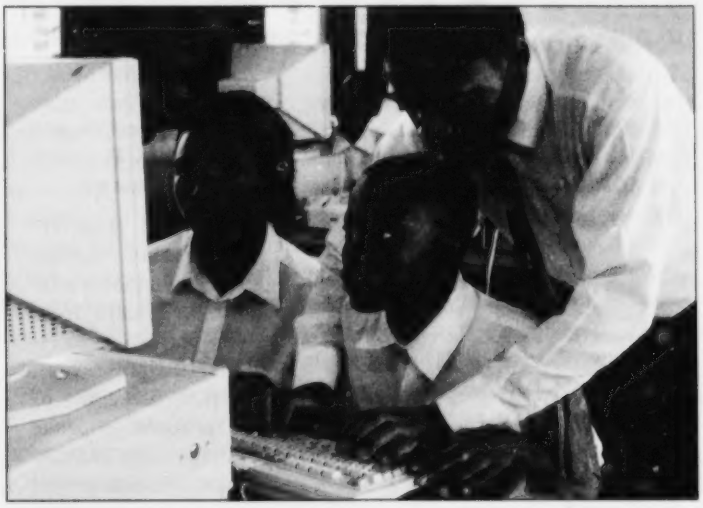
Bugulumbya, like many rural schools in Africa, had no electricity, Mr. Busima noted. NEPAD officials, the Ugandan government and a consortium led by the Hewlett-Packard (HP) computer company provided the school with computers, furniture, electricity and all the equipment necessary to create an e-school. The community — teachers, students and parents — banded together to plaster and paint the buildings. Within weeks, the school was fixed up.

"Our school does not look the same," the headmaster said. "We are a three-hour drive from the country's capital, Kampala. We had no hope of being connected to the [electricity] grid. But now we have a generator to run the computers, we have DSL, television, the Internet. We feel equal to the rest of Uganda, and indeed the world."

Web-surfing might seem like a luxury for a continent struggling with poverty, disease and other basic needs. But experts at a recent NEPAD-sponsored conference in Nairobi, Kenya, warned that development will be seriously hindered if Africa fails to bridge the ICT gap that separates the continent from developed countries. Despite improvements, only 2.5 per cent of Africa's 800 million people have Internet access, compared with 17.8 per cent in the rest of the world, the experts noted.

Bugulumbya was the first of 120 schools to receive computers and Internet services during the first phase of the e-schools project. According to the e-Africa Commission, which coordinates all NEPAD communications technology activities, this first phase is a one-year demonstration stage in 20 African

countries. Each country will choose six schools to try out the programme. Some 150,000 African teachers and students, the commission says, will benefit from the new computers and Internet access, and, in some cases, phones, fax machines, radio and television. Teachers are being trained to prepare and present material in the most interesting ways to their pupils.



Teacher showing secondary students how to use computers.

Panos Pictures / Chris Sattlberger

'We cannot afford to do less'

"This initiative is necessary because everywhere else in the world, this is what governments are doing," says Henry Chasia, the commission's deputy executive chairperson. "In Africa, we cannot afford to do less because to do so is to tamper recklessly with our future." The demonstration phase, he adds, will help governments determine the type of equipment and training they will need. It also will highlight the best ways to overcome any difficulties.

Bugulumbya is already providing lessons. The biggest challenge, Mr. Busima said, is fixing the computers when they break down. Some teachers and students received training, but, notes the headmaster, the school needs a full-time technician with a solid background in computers.

The school is also waiting for all the computers promised in July 2005. "So far we have received only 12 of the 48 computers promised," he said. "We have 300 students and things will be much better if we get the rest."

Countries participating in the first phase were selected from those that joined NEPAD's voluntary African Peer Review Mechanism, which allows participating African countries to monitor and evaluate each other's political and economic management. Thirteen private companies will initially supply the necessary equipment and training to students and teachers. Governments will then take over the administration.

NEPAD promoters hope that with enough money, up to 600,000 institutions — and ultimately all African primary and secondary schools — will be transformed into e-schools.

Access to information and communications technologies can empower everyone, from businesses to communities, Olivier Suinat, managing director of HP Africa, told *Africa Renewal*. "It has every potential of transforming Africa. For this reason, HP is proud to head up a consortium on behalf of the NEPAD e-schools initiative."

Bugulumbya, he added, is an excellent example of what NEPAD and its partners can do to encourage students to learn. With the Internet, geography need no longer isolate rural schools from the rest of the world. ■

New Partnership for Africa's Development

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) was adopted as the continent's main development framework at a July 2001 summit meeting of African heads of state. According to NEPAD, attainment of Africa's long-term development goals is anchored in the determination of African peoples "to extricate themselves and the continent from the malaise of underdevelopment and exclusion in a globalizing world." It calls for a new relationship between Africa and the international community, in which the non-African partners seek to complement Africa's own efforts. The United Nations, Group of Eight industrialized nations and various donor countries have pledged to do so.

For Africa to develop, argues NEPAD, three conditions must prevail:

- peace, security, democracy and good political governance
- improved economic and corporate governance
- regional cooperation and integration.

NEPAD further identifies several priority sectors requiring special attention and action:

- physical infrastructure, especially roads, railways and power systems linking neighbouring countries
- information and communications technology
- human development, focusing on health, education and skills development
- agriculture
- promoting the diversification of production and exports.

Many of the required resources will initially need to come from outside the continent, although African governments are redoubling efforts to mobilize more domestic resources. "Africa," states NEPAD, "recognizes that it holds the key to its own development."

Pledging peace at Great Lakes summit

In a region emerging from war, cooperation remains a challenge

By **Michael Fleshman**

Efforts to consolidate peace in Central Africa's war–ravaged Great Lakes area took another step forward at the end of 2006 with the adoption of the comprehensive Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region. The agreement was signed by the heads of state of 11 countries in Nairobi on 15 December and came just weeks after another significant regional milestone, the successful presidential election in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

The region plunged into widespread armed conflict in the chaotic aftermath of both genocide in Rwanda in 1994 and the overthrow of the dictatorial government of Mobutu Sese Seko in the DRC, then called Zaire, in 1997. By 2003, when a transitional government took power in the DRC as part of a UN–backed peace agreement, eight African countries and a score of independent rebel groups were involved in the fighting. The protagonists included Rwandan and Ugandan forces seeking to overthrow the DRC government, Angolan, Zimbabwean and Namibian troops fighting alongside government soldiers, Burundian troops operating in the Congo against their own rebel opponents and anti–government Rwandan militias in the eastern DRC, in addition to local ethnic militias (see box, next page).

Four priorities, many challenges

The signers of the pact (Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Congo Republic, the DRC, Kenya, Rwanda, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia) pledged to cooperate in four areas: security, democracy and governance, economic development, and humanitarian and social welfare. They agreed to detailed region-wide protocols and programmes of action for each. The assembled leaders also pledged to develop joint approaches to HIV/AIDS, the empowerment of women, environmental protection and human rights. The pact's four main areas are:

Peace and security: Signers must renounce force in regional relations, abstain from sup-porting or tolerating the presence of armed dissidents of other states, cooperate in disarming and dismantling existing rebel movements, control regional arms transfers, eliminate and prevent hate speech and ethnic discrimination, and prosecute war crimes and crimes against humanity, particularly sexual violence and abuse of women and girls.

Democracy and good governance: The signatories must establish or abide by the rule of law and respect for human rights; enact or strengthen constitutional systems based on a separation of powers, political pluralism, regular and credible elections and transparency in political and economic governance; and establish a regional council on information and communications to promote free expression and media rights.

Economic development: Parties to the agreement must end or prevent the illegal exploitation of natural resources, respect national sovereignty over natural resources, establish the Great Lakes as a "specific reconstruction and development zone," harmonize national and regional economic policies, cooperate in projects relating to regional energy, transport and communications, and enhance commerce and development among border populations to promote regional integration.

Humanitarian and social welfare: The signers must protect and assist internally displaced populations in line with international standards, protect and respect the property rights of returning refugees and displaced persons, establish regional early warning and disaster prevention systems, and guarantee access to basic services for populations affected by conflict and natural disasters.

Reuters / Anthony Nkubuna

Three leaders sign pact at Great Lakes summit. From left: Rwandan Prime Minister Bernard Makuza, DRC President Joseph Kabila and Burundian President Pierre Nkurunziza.

'Long and difficult' path

The pact is the product of a six-year, African-led diplomatic process aimed at reducing mutual suspicions between area governments and establishing a legal and political framework for addressing the region's pressing economic, security and humanitarian problems. The first breakthrough came in 2002 in South Africa, when the parties to the Congo conflict agreed on a cease-fire, the withdrawal of foreign forces and the establishment of an interim government.

In 2004, regional leaders responded to a UN Security Council call for region-wide talks by attending the first International Conference on the Great Lakes Region in Tanzania. That summit adopted the Dar es Salaam declaration, outlining the terms of a comprehensive regional settlement. It was at the second international conference in December that regional leaders agreed on the final details of the pact. The process has been supported politically and financially by a 28-country Group of

Friends that includes South Africa, the US, Nigeria, and many members of the European Union.

In a message delivered to the summit on behalf of then Secretary-General Kofi Annan, Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Africa Legwaila Joseph Legwaila noted that "the Great Lakes region has witnessed some of the bloodiest wars in the world. The cooperative mechanism embodied by this international conference reflects the centrality of the regional dimension in finding solutions to the various conflicts." He acknowledged that negotiations "proved to be long and difficult because of the magnitude and complexity of the problems" and cautioned that the hardest part — implementation — still lies ahead.

The responsibility for implementation rests with the governments of the Great Lakes, aided by a conference secretariat that reports to a regional committee of cabinet ministers. This committee in turn advises the heads of state, who will meet in summit every two years. Civil society groups are expected to participate locally through national implementing bodies. Funding for the secretariat will come from mandatory assessments on signatory countries and donor funding. The pact also establishes a Reconstruction and Development Fund, to be financed by donors and Great Lakes governments and managed by the African Development Bank. The fund will help underwrite reconstruction, development and regional integration projects.

Failure 'not a choice'

Although the complex peace agreement is fragile, there are signs of progress. In early February southern Sudanese authorities ordered Ugandan rebel forces out of the country, accusing them of mounting attacks inside Sudan. Several weeks later, the DRC's newly elected President Joseph Kabila told a meeting of Great Lakes parliamentarians that the area's conflicts were "blocking development" in the area. "Open war has come to an end, and dialogue has become the method of resolving conflicts," he said. He added that his government is closely monitoring continuing peace talks in Uganda and Burundi.

According to press reports, the DRC's armed forces have sought to expel the remaining Rwandan rebels from its territory and complete the demobilization of former combatants. Some 20,000 UN peacekeepers remain in the DRC to assist the new government with security. A 6,000-strong UN force completed its peace mission in Burundi at the end of 2006.

In an interview, the head of the conference secretariat, Tanzanian Ambassador Liberata Mulamula, told *Africa Renewal* that while implementing the pact is "a huge challenge," there are prospects for "quick dividends" in a number of areas, "including the establishment of joint security management of common borders," the creation of "transborder development basins" to ease poverty and discontent along porous and insecure national boundaries, and early-warning mechanisms for conflict prevention and humanitarian emergencies.

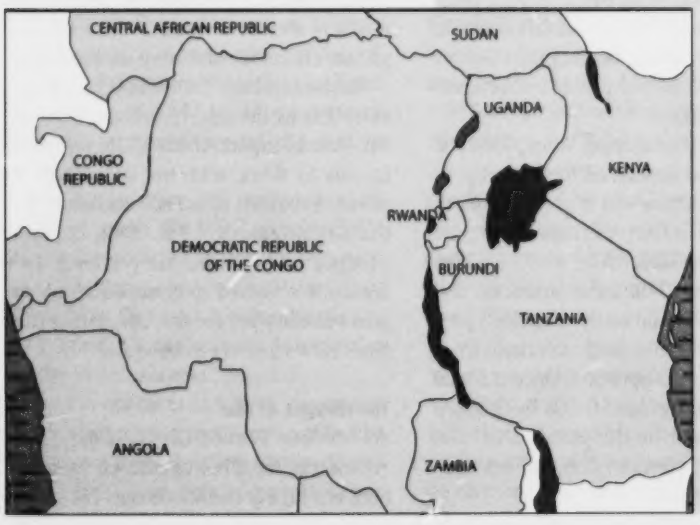
"The signing of the pact was seen as a new beginning for the Great Lakes region and indeed the African continent," Ms. Mulamula said. But success will hinge on adequate funding for the agreement and its development programmes and on the political will of regional leaders to respect its provisions. "The world has witnessed the devastating effects of war and intractable conflicts in this region," she concluded. "Failure is not a choice!" ■

Africa's first 'world war'

The Great Lakes region earned the unenviable title of host to "Africa's first world war" after the collapse of the Mobuto dictatorship in 1997 triggered a scramble for control of the vast, mineral-rich Zaire (later called the Democratic Republic of the Congo). But the ongoing crisis in the Great Lakes is really a series of interlocking conflicts involving virtually all of the countries in the region. Relations between the Sudanese and Ugandan governments, for example, were badly strained by allegations of Ugandan backing for the rebel Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army and charges that the Sudanese in turn supported the Ugandan Lord's Resistance Army insurgency that has taken more than 10,000 lives, displaced 2 million people and fuelled the kidnapping of upwards of 25,000 children into the rebel army. Uganda hosts nearly 200,000 Sudanese refugees, plus tens of thousands more Congolese and Rwandans, which places an enormous strain on Uganda's modest resources.

According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Tanzania — among the poorest countries in the world — has for years hosted more than 600,000 refugees from countries in the Great Lakes. As of early 2006, Zambia and Kenya sheltered an additional 300,000.

In the DRC alone, upwards of 4 million people died from violence, starvation and disease, 1.3 million refugees decamped to neighbouring countries and 4 million internally displaced people, including 1.4 million children, were driven from their homes. Many tens of thousands of women and girls have been raped and sexually assaulted over the course of the brutal conflict (see *Africa Renewal*, January 2007).



UN / Africa Renewal

Africa: UN priority

from page 3

Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), an African-led plan to achieve continental peace and development. "The Africans for the first time decided that they were not going to wait for the General Assembly to come up with a plan," explained Mr. Legwaila. "The Africans realized that they themselves would have to take their destiny into their own hands."

The General Assembly welcomed this African commitment. Rather than drafting another UN plan, it decided in November 2002 that the international community should instead support Africa's own efforts, through NEPAD.

In September 2005, leaders from across the globe assembled at UN headquarters to review progress in reducing global poverty and achieving other Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for human well-being. Noting that Africa lags particularly far behind in reaching the MDGs, they included a special section in the summit "outcome document," highlighting the continent's specific requirements. They reiterated international support for NEPAD and pledged more aid, debt relief, trade opportunities and other assistance. "We reaffirm our commitment to address the special needs of Africa," the world leaders declared.

For the many different parts of the UN system, Africa has become a built-in priority. Much of the UN's peacekeeping and humanitarian work concentrates on Africa. The UN Development Programme (UNDP) devotes about half of all core programme spending to Africa — some $680 mn in 45 sub-Saharan countries in 2005 alone.

Dr. Margaret Chan, who took office as the new director-general of the World Health Organization (WHO) in early January, announced that her two chief goals would be to improve the health of women and of Africans. "The people of Africa," she noted, "carry an enormous and disproportionate burden of ill health and premature death." She pledged the WHO's help in strengthening Africa's weak national health systems.

Passing the torch

As his decade as Secretary-General drew to a close, Mr. Annan reflected on the accomplishments and disappointments of his tenure. Among his greatest achievements, he believed, was focusing global attention on the fight against poverty, through the MDGs campaign.

Being from Africa, Mr. Annan had a particular advantage in speaking bluntly to African leaders about issues they were not always comfortable addressing. During his first year in office, he urged African leaders, in especially forceful terms, to do far more to safeguard and advance human rights. Such rights, he said, "are not a luxury of the rich countries for which Africa is not ready."

Citing the concept of a "responsibility to protect," he repeatedly encouraged African leaders to act against genocide and other massive human rights violations in neighbouring African states, contrary to their earlier tendency to remain silent about such abuses. And he strongly urged African leaders to speak out frankly and publicly about HIV/AIDS and to devote greater efforts to combating the pandemic.

UN / Esaïe Dabeba

The outgoing UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, urged Africans to work with his successor to advance Africa's cause.

In an address to the General Assembly in September 2006, Mr. Annan recalled that when he first took office in 1997, he felt that the world faced three main challenges: ensuring that globalization would benefit all humanity, healing the disorder of the post–Cold War period and promoting human rights.

While these challenges were global, he said, they also concerned him directly, as an African. "Africa was in great danger of being excluded from the benefits of globalization," he said. "Africa was also the scene of some of the most protracted and brutal conflicts. And many of Africa's people felt they were unjustly condemned to be exploited and oppressed, since colonial rule had been replaced by an inequitable economic order on the global level and sometimes by corrupt rulers and warlords at the local level."

In December, following Mr. Ban's selection as the new Secretary-General, Mr. Annan urged Africa's UN representatives to work with his successor "to advance Africa's cause and agenda within the organization." Mr. Ban, in turn, pledged to build on his predecessor's legacy. He vowed to concentrate on the goals already set for the UN, rather than find "new frontiers to conquer."

The ravages of war

As Mr. Ban learned firsthand during his Africa trip, the UN's agenda on the continent is a highly ambitious one. No goal is

Ban Ki-moon, a seasoned diplomat

Mr. Ban Ki-moon, the eighth UN Secretary-General, has more than 37 years of experience in public service. Among his prior positions, he was the minister of foreign affairs and trade of his native Republic of Korea, as well as chief national security adviser. During the 1970s, he was first secretary for his country's Permanent Mission to the UN in New York and director of the UN Division at the Foreign Ministry's headquarters in Seoul. While ambassador to the UN in Vienna in 1999, he served as chairman of the Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Organization. In 2001-02 he was chef de cabinet of the Republic of Korea's presidency of the General Assembly. Mr. Ban has also been active in inter-Korean relations, in 1992 as vice-chair of the South-North Joint Nuclear Control Commission and in 2005, while foreign minister, as an architect of a landmark agreement aimed at promoting peace and stability on the Korean peninsula.

more important than achieving peace and security, he affirmed. Addressing the AU summit in Addis Ababa, Mr. Ban recalled his own childhood experience in war-torn Korea, which showed him "how war robs individuals of the chance of building a decent life and whole societies of the chance to prosper."

To help achieve a more peaceful future for Africa, Mr. Ban noted that the UN currently has more than two-thirds of all its peacekeepers worldwide stationed there. As of January 2007, there were nearly 55,100 uniformed peacekeeping troops and police on the ground in six African missions — in Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Liberia, Sudan and the Western Sahara, and on the Ethiopia-Eritrea border.

In addition, Mr. Ban reported that the UN had just allocated $35 mn from its new Peacebuilding Fund to help consolidate peace in Burundi (another $35 mn was allocated to Sierra Leone in March). He also reaffirmed the UN's support for helping the AU build up its own capacities for peacekeeping and conflict resolution.

Some countries are demonstrating notable progress. The DRC, in the wake of its first democratic elections in 40 years, is now a "true source of hope for all of Africa," Mr. Ban stated during his visit to that Central African country. Liberia also "shines as an example," he said.

But the conflicts in Côte d'Ivoire and Somalia have been more intractable, the Secretary-General acknowledged, and "bleed like open wounds on the face of the continent." Most serious at the moment is the crisis in Sudan's western Darfur region, "the largest humanitarian crisis in the world." Mr. Ban met with Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir during the African summit in an effort to secure the Sudanese government's support for a hybrid UN-AU peacekeeping force in Darfur. "The people of Darfur have waited much too long," the Secretary-General stated after the meeting. "This is just unacceptable."

Because of the spillover of the violence in Darfur into neighbouring Chad, Mr. Ban proposed in a report to the Security Council in February that the UN also authorize a mission of up to 11,000 peacekeepers for eastern Chad, to deter cross-border attacks and protect 120,000 displaced Chadians and 232,000 Sudanese refugees.

From poverty to climate change

Combating poverty and promoting economic and social development are also daunting tasks for Africa, and the new UN Secretary-General took the occasion of a visit to the Kibera slum in Nairobi, Kenya, to highlight them. "I feel very much humbled by what I am seeing now," he said during the visit. "That makes me resolve again my firm commitment to work for the improvement of living conditions, education, water, sanitation, housing — all these are the challenges which we must overcome."

While some African countries have achieved reasonably strong economic growth rates and are making progress towards at least some of the MDGs, much of the continent lags far behind, Mr. Ban noted in his AU address. He reported that he would soon convene a working group of African stakeholders, international organizations and donors — a "coalition of the willing" — to develop an action plan to advance the MDGs in Africa.

Addressing the effects of climate change will be a major focus of his global agenda, Mr. Ban has affirmed frequently since taking office. In Addis Ababa, he noted that the impact of climate change "will fall disproportionately on some of Africa's poorest countries." He cited UN estimates that 30 per cent of Africa's coastal infrastructure could be inundated by rising sea levels linked to global warming, that more than a quarter of Africa's habitats could be lost by 2085 and that tens of millions of people could be in jeopardy. "The time has come for the rest of the world to assist African countries in adapting to the effects of a warming planet."

Given the numerous problems and enormous potential of Africa, Mr. Ban assured Africans that their concerns will be at the top of the international agenda. "The success or failure of the United Nations in the coming years," he said in Addis Ababa, "will be determined largely on this continent." ■

Gays combat bias

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in the courts and at the African Union, asserting their rights under international law and the African Charter for Human and People's Rights and claiming a place in Africa as Africans.

In February 2004, 22 homosexual, bisexual and transgender organizations from 16 African countries called on their leaders to "safeguard our real situations and our basic rights. We, African lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgendered people, do exist — despite your attempts to deny our existence.

"Political leaders promote hatred against us to solidify their own political situations," they continued, but "we have and have always had a place in Africa. . . . We demand that our voices be heard." ■

AFRICA AGENDA

19–20 April 2007, Hanover/Hamburg (Germany) — 2nd Energy Africa Forum. Organized by Afrika-Verein (German African Business Association) in cooperation with the Hanover Fair and the African Petroleum Producers' Association. Contact Walter Englert, tel (49-40) 41 91 33 15, e-mail <post@afrikaverein.de>, website <www.energyafrica.de>

20–22 April 2007, Uppsala (Sweden) — Informalizing Economies and New Organizing Strategies in Africa. Organized by the Nordic Africa Institute. Contact Ilda Lourenço-Lindell, tel (46) 18 56 22 02, e-mail <ilda.lindell@nai.uu.se>, website <www.nai.uu.se/news/conferences/en/2007/>

27–29 April 2007, Washington, DC (USA) — 5th Annual Spring Conference of Ghana Physicians and Surgeons Foundation, focusing on medical education and health policy in Ghana. Contact Kwasi Debra, tel (1-301) 552-9495, fax (1-301) 552-9743, e-mail <kadebra@pol.net>, website <www.ghanaphysicians.org>

7–9 May 2007, Algiers (Algeria) — Third Finance International Forum. Tel (41-22) 731 98 91, fax (41-22) 731 98 92, e-mail <suisse.contact@fif-alger.com>, website <www.fif-alger.com>

21–23 May 2007, Accra (Ghana) — Ghana Investment Forum. Contact Peter Ankrah, tel (233-21) 665125, ext. 300, e-mail <pankrah@gipc.org.gh>, website <www.gipc.org.gh/documents/CBC_Advert.htm>

7–8 June 2007, Nairobi (Kenya) — 2nd Annual African HIV/AIDS Clinical Update and Leadership Development Conference. Sponsored by Valley AIDS Council. E-mail <crsmith.vac@tachc.org>, website <www.valleyaids.org/>

12–14 June 2007, Kinshasa (DRC) — International Conference on Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration and Stability in Africa. Organized by the UN Office of the Special Adviser for Africa and the government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Representatives of governments, national DDR commissions, peacekeeping missions, civil society groups and other organizations will exchange experiences. Contact Mieko Ikegame, tel (1-212) 963-1937, fax (1-212) 963-3892, e-mail <ikegame@un.org>

13–15 June 2007, Cape Town (South Africa) — World Economic Forum on Africa 2007. E-mail <Africa@weforum.org>, website <www.weforum.org/en/events/WorldEconomicForumonAfrica2007/index.htm>

18–20 June 2007, Pretoria (South Africa) — Force Preparation: Combat and Mission Readiness. Preparing and training military, civilian and police personnel for peacekeeping operations in Africa. Organized by the International Quality and Productivity Center (IQPC). Contact Noxi Mshumpela, tel (27-11) 669 5106, e-mail <noxi.mshumpela@iqpc.co.za>, website <www.iqpc.co.za>

WHAT HAS TAKEN PLACE

20–23 February 2007, Kigali (Rwanda) — 2007 Women Parliamentarians International Conference, under the theme, "Gender, Nation Building and Role of Parliaments." Contact Şoni Kanamugire, tel (250) 0883 0629, e-mail <kanamugire@rwandawomen-mp.org>, website <www.rwanda2007.org>

12–15 March 2007, Sandton (South Africa) — 2nd Annual Peacekeeping, Reconstruction and Stability Operations Africa. Contact Noxi Mshumpela, tel (27-11) 669 5106, fax (27-11) 669 5069, email <noxi.mshumpela@iqpc.co.za>, website <www.iqpc.co.za>

22–24 March 2007, Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) — African Civil Society Forum. To explore the best ways to partner with the African Union, UN Economic Commission for Africa and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Facilitated by the European Centre for Development Policy Management. Fax (41-22) 301 2000, e-mail <afcsf2007.register@ngocongo.org>, website <www.ngocongo.org>

28–29 March 2007, London (UK) — 4th Annual African Petroleum Forum. Website <www.petro21.com/>

AFRICA BOOKS

Unbowed: A Memoir by Wangari Maathai (Knopf Publishing Group, New York, NY, USA, 2006; 320 pp; $24.95)

Africa after Gender? eds. Catherine M. Cole, Takyiwaa Manuh and Stephan F. Miescher (Indiana University Press, Indiana, USA, 2007; 344 pp; pb $24.95, hb $65)

Le double agenda de la R-D Congo: Tribus ou nation? by Ghislain Kitenge Mpange (L'Harmattan, Paris, France, 2007; 100 pp; pb €9.60, FF63)

Education scolaire et lien social en Afrique noire by Marcus Ndongmo (L'Harmattan, Paris, France, 2007; 306 pp; pb €27, FF177)

Towards a New Map of Africa, eds. Camilla Toulmin, Ben Wisner and Rutendo Chitiga (Earthscan, London, UK, 2005; 350 pp; £16.99)

Children at War by P.W. Singer (University of California Press, CA, USA, 2006; 278 pp; pb $16.95)

Leashing the Dogs of War: Conflict Management in a Divided World, eds. Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson and Pamela Aall (United States Institute of Peace Press, Washington, DC, USA, 2007; 800 pp; pb $45, hb $75)

Innocents Lost: When Child Soldiers Go to War by Jimmie Briggs (Basic Books, New York, NY, USA, 2005; 188 pp; hb $24.95)

Transitions in Namibia: Which Change for Whom? ed. Henning Melber (Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala, Sweden, 2006; 250 pp; pb SEK290, $37.50)

Ending Africa's Wars: Progressing to Peace, eds. Oliver Furley and Roy May (Ashgate Publishing, Williston, Vermont, USA, 2006; 258 pp; hb $99.95)

L'Afrique à l'ère du savoir: science, société et pouvoir by Jean-Marc Ela (L'Harmattan, Paris, France, 2007; 410 pp; €29, FF190)

Entre la postmodernité et le néo-pragmatisme: Histoire de la philosophie africaine, Livre IV by Grégoire Biyogo (L'Harmattan, Paris, France, 2006; 252 pp; €18.50)

Etats et sociétés fragiles – Entre conflits, reconstruction et développement, eds. Jean-Marc Châtaigner and Hervé Magro (Karthala, Paris, France, 2007; 560 pp; €25)

He Didn't Die Easy: The Search for Hope Amid Poverty, War and Genocide by Mary W. Kimani (iUniverse, Inc., Lincoln, NE, USA, 2006; 172 pp; pb $15.95, hb $25.95)

La succession d'Eyadema: Le perroquet de Kara by Charles Debbasch (L'Harmattan, Paris, France, 2006; 190 pp; €17)

History Making and Present Day Politics: The Making of Collective Memory in South Africa, ed. Hans-Eric Stolten (Stylus Publishing, Herndon, Virginia, USA, 2006; 300 pp; $39.95)

L'illusion tragique du pouvoir au Congo-Zaïre by Kambayi Bwatshia (L'Harmattan, Paris, France, 2007; 256 pp; pb €22, FF144)

Learning to Compete in African Industry: Institutions and Technology in Development by Banji Oyelaran-Oyeyinka (Ashgate Publishing, Williston, Vermont, USA, 2006; 208 pp; hb $99.95)

Aid and Influence: Do Donors Help or Hinder? by Stephen Browne (Stylus Publishing, Herndon, Virginia, USA, 2006; 192 pp; pb $32.50, hb $110)

Côte d'Ivoire: un plaidoyer pour une prise de conscience africaine, ed. Claude Koudou (L'Harmattan, Paris, France, 2007; 148 pp; pb €13.50, FF89)

Escaping Poverty's Grasp: The Environmental Foundations of Poverty Reduction by David Reed (Stylus Publishing, Herndon, Virginia, USA, 2006; 224 pp; pb $35, hb $85)

Legacies of Power: Leadership Change and Former Presidents in African Politics, eds. Roger Southall and Henning Melber (Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala, Sweden, 2005; 350 pp; pb SEK240, €25)

Corporate Social Responsibility and International Development: Is Business the Solution? by Michael Hopkins (Stylus Publishing, Herndon, Virginia, USA, 2006; 224 pp; hb $39.95)

Against Global Capitalism: African Social Movements Confront Neoliberal Globalization by E. Osei Kwadwo Prempeh (Ashgate Publishing, Williston, Vermont, USA, 2006; 198 pp; hb $99.95)

The Media and the Rwanda Genocide, ed. Allan Thompson (Pluto Press, London, UK, 2007; 480 pp; pb £19.99, $29.95, €30, hb £60, $95, €90)

AFRICA IN BRIEF

Education key to women's progress

Marking this year's International Women's Day, 8 March, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) said that education is the key to addressing discrimination and violence against girls and attaining the Millennium Deve'opment Goals. Educated girls are better equipped to protect themselves against life-threatening diseases such as HIV/AIDS, are more likely to give birth to healthy babies who will survive and grow into adulthood, tend to delay marriage and are more likely to have fewer children.

"Despite progress, we continue to live in a world where millions of girls remain out of school, engaged in exploitative labour, are trafficked, are vulnerable to HIV/AIDS and are targets of sexual violence," said UNICEF Executive Director Ann M. Veneman.

"Economic development is enhanced in societies where both girls and boys are educated," she said. "We need accelerated efforts to help ensure that girls go to school and can learn and study in safe environments." ■

Donors endorse Liberian plan

The international community has strongly backed Liberia's post-conflict plans by pledging to forgive $700 mn of the nation's foreign debt. This relief from the US and other major creditors will enable Liberia to use the resources for development, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf said at the Liberia Partner's Forum, hosted by the World Bank, in Washington, DC, in February. The forum also brought promises of grants from the US ($200 mn over two years), the European Commission ($100 mn), Ireland ($20 mn), Britain ($19 mn) and Sweden ($16 mn). The response signaled "strong endorsement" of Liberia's post-conflict reconstruction plans, Ms. Johnson-Sirleaf commented.

In addition, the world's largest steel company, Arcelor Mittal, has announced new investments of $1 bn to mine Liberia's substantial iron ore reserves and rehabilitate related infrastructure. That decision, said the president, could spark interest in the country by other transnational corporations — it "sent a message that not only is Liberia back, but is back in business." ■

Ghana celebrates 50 years

On the 50th anniversary of Ghana's independence — the first colony in sub-Saharan Africa to achieve its freedom — UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon lauded the country for setting an important precedent for the rest of the continent. "Ghana can look back proudly at that moment, knowing that their nation's early independence and statehood were an inspiration to the freedom struggles of people all over Africa," said Mr. Ban, who was represented in Accra by his Special Adviser on Africa Legwaila Joseph Legwaila.

Ghana has since also played a leading role in peacekeeping worldwide, as one of the top 10 countries contributing troops to UN peace operations. Ghanaians have served in UN missions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Timor-Leste, Lebanon, Liberia and Sierra Leone, among other countries. "Many Ghanaians have made the ultimate sacrifice and lost their lives in the cause of peace," said Mr. Ban. "To them and to your nation, the United Nations owes a debt of gratitude." ■

Global activists plant 'seeds of hope' in Nairobi

More than 50,000 activists descended on Nairobi, Kenya, in January for the seventh World Social Forum (WSF). "The issues that emerged were very important — water, human rights, the question of illegitimate debt, housing and many more," said Ms. Wangari Maathai, the 2004 Nobel Peace prize winner and an environmental and women's rights activist in her native Kenya. "I am sure we have planted the seeds of hope. But the challenge remains of what we shall do when we go back home."

Panos Pictures / Sven Torfinn

Activists at World Social Forum in Nairobi denounce foreign debt.

The first WSF was held in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 2001, as a counterforce to the World Economic Forum, a gathering of top business and political leaders held annually in Davos, Switzerland. It has since grown into an annual event at which activists critical of the impact of globalization seek to mobilize public support around issues of economic, environmental and social justice. The delegates in Nairobi, who came from more than 100 countries, met under an "open space" at Nairobi's Moi International Sports Complex. By design, the forum, whose slogan is "Another world is possible," functions without officers, spokespeople or resolutions.

In Nairobi, the activists took their dialogue, poetry, drama and protests to the city's 2.5 million slum dwellers as a show of solidarity with the poor. "To fight the numerous African problems like poverty, it was clear that with the wealth of Africa's resource persons and social actors, we must start with local communities . . . offering people in African regions the possibility of playing a leading role in their own recovery," noted Ms. Sheila Muwanga, deputy director of the non-governmental Foundation for Human Rights Initiative. "The so-called 'poor people'—yet very intelligent and innovative—must be consulted and heard in order to tap ideas on how to preserve their common goods . . . as well as strengthen human, social and political rights in every country."

AFRICA WATCH

GLOBAL WARMING

Africa urges more action on climate change

African leaders are urging richer nations to do more to curb global warming. In a joint statement issued at a January 2007 summit meeting of the African Union (AU) in Khartoum, Sudan, they appealed for compliance with international agreements, such as the Kyoto Protocol, to reduce emissions of gases that contribute to climate change, including carbon dioxide. "We will continue to demand that countries which have not ratified the Kyoto Protocol do so," said the statement. More than 160 countries so far have signed the protocol, under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, which commits them to reducing practices that lead to global warming. Notable exceptions include the US and Australia.

The 53-member AU, the continent's premier political body, also called on industrialized countries to respect the principle of "pay as you pollute," rather than letting developing countries shoulder disproportionate costs. Africa, experts point out, contributes the smallest amount of emissions, but will suffer the greatest consequences of climate change. "In causing global warming, [developed] countries are committing aggression against us," said Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni.

Experts at the summit also urged greater cooperation among African countries to ameliorate the consequences of climate change. ■

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Africa ripe for 'first-in' investors

Sub-Saharan Africa is fast becoming a more attractive and hospitable destination for investors, reports the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA), an arm of the World Bank Group. Despite the many challenges for business in Africa, there are "considerable possibilities for new investments, and for diversifying and expanding business activities on the continent," says Mr. David Bridgman of MIGA.

In a new report, *Snapshot Africa*, the agency argues that given low current investment levels in textiles, apparel, food and beverage processing, horticulture, tourism, and call centers, "a first-in advantage awaits those investors ready to move into these relatively underdeveloped markets." The study examines the attractiveness of the six sectors in nine sub-Saharan countries — Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mali, Mozambique, Senegal, Tanzania and Uganda. *Snapshot Africa* is the fifth in a series of analyses by MIGA to guide investors with "hard to find" information on conditions in potential investment areas and help governments develop creative ways to attract foreign partners. ■

APPOINTMENTS

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Ms. **Asha-Rose Migiro** of the United Republic of Tanzania has been appointed deputy secretary-general of the UN by the Secretary-General. She is the first African to hold this influential office. She previously served as Tanzania's minister of foreign affairs and minister of community development, gender and children, as well as an elected member of Parliament. As foreign minister, she chaired Council of Minister's meetings of the International Conference of the Great Lakes (see page 18) and was president of the UN Security Council in January 2006.

UN

Mr. **John Holmes** of the UK is the UN's new under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs and emergency relief coordinator. As a career diplomat since 1973, he has served in various capacities, including as private secretary for overseas affairs and diplomatic adviser to Prime Minister John Major. In 1999, he was awarded a knighthood, mainly in recognition of his role in the Northern Ireland peace process. From 1999 to 2001, Mr. Holmes was ambassador to Portugal, and subsequently to France.

OECD

The UN Secretary-General has appointed Mr. **Kiyotaka Akasaka** of Japan as under-secretary-general for communications and public information. At the time of his appointment, Mr. Akasaka had been deputy secretary-general of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development since August 2003. He first joined Japan's Foreign Ministry in 1971 and was his country's ambassador to the UN in 2000-01. He also held posts at the World Health Organization from 1993 to 1997.

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Mr. **B. Lynn Pascoe** of the US assumed the post of under-secretary-general for political affairs on 1 March 2007. In his 40-year career in the US Foreign Service, Mr. Pascoe held positions on the Soviet and China desks, was deputy assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian affairs, was a special negotiator for regional conflicts in the former Soviet Union and served as ambassador to Malaysia and, most recently, to Indonesia.

The UN Secretary-General has appointed Mr. **Muhammad Shaaban** of Egypt as under-secretary-general for General Assembly affairs and conference management. Previously he served as Egypt's assistant foreign minister for European affairs, and was ambassador to Denmark, Lithuania and Belgium. In 1997-98, he was assistant foreign minister for African affairs, in charge of managing his country's relations with African states and regional organizations.

The UN Secretary-General has appointed Mr. **Ibrahim Gambari** of Nigeria as his special adviser on the International Compact with Iraq and Other Issues, at the rank of under-secretary-general. Previously he was under-secretary-general for political affairs.

Mr. **Jan Egeland** of Norway has been named by the Secretary-General as his special adviser on the prevention and resolution of conflict, at the under-secretary-general level. With more than 25 years of experience in humanitarian operations and peace processes, he served as under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs and emergency relief coordinator from 2003 to 2006.